

CC-6/ SEM-SOCIOLOGY OF RELIGION

Religion as a sociological concept.

Religion is an individual as well as group phenomenon. It consists of

1. a body of beliefs
2. a set of practices
3. a range of moral prescriptions

Religion covers the entire span of human life, from birth to death. In other words , understanding of human life inevitably brings in the issue of religion.

It helps spelling out goals of life and for their realizations.

It exercises powerful influence on the process of socialization and social control.

It contributes to social cohesion, but in certain situations, may lead to conflict

The Sociology of religion studies

1. the social context of religion
2. role of religion in shaping and reshaping social order
3. it provides understanding of the positive and negative aspects of religion in life of individual and groups
4. role of religion in the context of social stability and change
5. focuses on socially established patterns of religious behaviours
6. religious movements

Most of us live in multi-religious societies. There are different approaches in the study of religion. Evolutionism and Functionalism are two dominant approaches in this field. Religion is also understood through the study of belief and symbols.

Some frequently asked questions :

1. how to study religion using scientific method?
2. as religion revolves around the unseen
3. how are gods and heaven connected with sociology ,an objective field of knowledge?
4. Religion is a personal affair, so how to justify the study it sociology ?

Religion is a social phenomenon, inevitably connected to our day-to-day living in society.

Every society has religious beliefs, rites and rituals and organizations. Religion, very often affects our understanding of everyday life. The way in which we relate to each other is very often influenced by our religious beliefs.

Religion is also related to politics, and to economic activities like production, distribution and consumption.

In the book on Religion , Society and Individual, Yinger (1957) wrote that religion is a social phenomenon, because it is “ woven into the fabric of social life”.

Irrespective of being a believer or non-believer, sociologists are supposed to study without bias the way in which people experience religion. Sociologists try to unearth the invisible, taken-for-granted, ignored realities. Reality is not what meets our eyes alone.

Both religion and society have positive as well as negative effects on each other.

Sociologists also study the relationship of religion with other social institutions like education, government and economy. They try to study the separate meanings of religion for various groups and levels in society.

The sociological interest in the study of religion is certainly different from the concerns of the philosophers and theologians,